



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions

Chair's Corner



Our FEB is into a full Spring Swing with activities galore!

Our **2019 Leadership FEB** program will kick off on

April 23rd with the class visiting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Agencies in Galveston. They will meet one day, each month after, to visit a variety of Federal Agencies in the Houston and surrounding areas to see the diverse missions, challenges, and accomplishments.

The annual **FEB Awards Ceremony** is scheduled for Wednesday, May 15, 2019 at the United Way of Greater Houston. This year, we have 44 award nominations, in eight different categories, that have been reviewed by our Selection Committee Volunteers prior to sending to the "Non-Federal panel" who rate the finalists. I encourage each of you to register/attend our Awards Ceremony to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Public Servants, across our area, who exemplify the very best of Federal Service! AND get a glimpse into the many missions and accomplishments occurring in the Greater

Houston area.

May 5-11, 2019

35 years of honoring public servants and connecting citizens with their government
#PSRW

And because it is considered "tax preparation time", I want to remind everyone about our coordinated "MyFreeTaxes" initiative. The FEB has coordinated with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for access to this multiple organization effort. This allows federal employees, federal contractors and their family members who make \$66,000 or less to utilize the tax preparation software to electronically prepare and file both federal and state tax returns at no cost! More information is provided on page 3 or you can get started by visiting:
<https://www.oklahoma.feb.gov/MyFreeTaxesAddtlInfo.html>

I look forward to seeing you at any or many of our upcoming activities!

Natalie
Natalie Saiz, Chair

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THREE SURPRISING BENEFITS OF MAKING A COMMITMENT

A leader who's reluctant to commitment respects the value of commitments. But remarkable success demands commitment.

Reluctance to commit is natural. Refusal to commit is deadly.

Leaders who excel make courageous commitments. Half-hearted commitment always disappoints.

The courage to commit is the beginning of success.

3 surprising benefits of making commitments:

#1. Increased creativity.

You can't figure out how to do what you don't want to do.

You figure out how to fulfill commitments. Lack of commitment makes you dumb.

Creativity follows commitment.

#2. Energy.

Energy follows commitments.

Before commitments, you're reluctant and lethargic.

Commitments give direction to energy. Potential energy is useless until it's released.

#3. Limiting options – establishing priorities.

Apart from commitment, the seduction of shiny objects wins.

When you commit to your spouse, you eliminate other options.

Drifting is excluded when you commit to excel.

Commitment tips:

#1. Make small commitments.

Stephen Guise says a commitment to do one push-up a day changed his life. ([Mini Habits](#))

The commitment to go to my office and put my hands on the keyboard has resulted in over 3,000 blog posts.

I didn't set out to write 3,000 blog posts. If I had, I never would have started.

[Guise](#) says if your commitment is embarrassingly small, you're on the right path.

#2. Commit just for today.

Avoid most long-term commitments.

Commit to give three affirmations for every correction or criticism – just for today.

#3. Commit with.

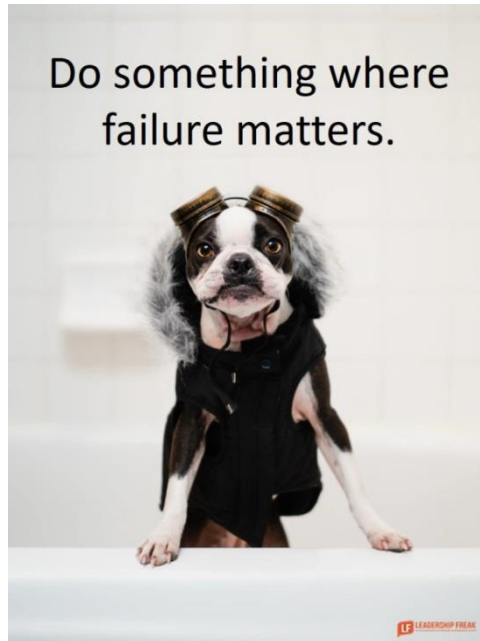
Find a commitment partner – someone who will commit with you. You go further with than alone.

Six commitments of successful leaders:

1. Fertilize your leadership.
2. Use the scalpel on yourself – seek feedback.
3. Try stuff.
4. Persistently turn toward the future.
5. Bring up elephants.
6. Keep your piggy bank empty. Give all the credit to others.

Do something where failure matters.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2019/03/04/three-surprising-benefits-of-making-commitments/>





Houston Federal Executive Board

My Free Taxes Initiative



MyFreeTaxes is a coordinated initiative between the Federal Executive Board of Houston, the Internal Revenue Service, H&R Block, and United Way.

This is intended for federal employees (and contractors) who made \$66,000 or less in 2018 to electronically file both their federal and state returns at no charge. The MyFreeTaxes Partnership provides preparation and filing assistance for qualified individuals, at no cost, for one federal tax return and up to three state returns. It's easy, safe, secure and 100% free. *Family members, friends and community colleagues may also use the link from our Houston FEB website to do the same, if they meet the income criteria.*

Employees can prepare their returns, online, utilizing the H&R Block software that takes them through an interview process to ensure they receive the maximum benefit.

In years past, they had tax coaches available at a 1-800 number. They have reduced that service, this year, and have provided a more robust "Question & Answer" forum. There is still E-mail support at: Info@myfreetaxes.com and Chat support: Online (while in the software)

To e-file a 2018 tax return or other electronic forms, they must verify identity with their Self-Select PIN or Adjusted Gross Income from their 2017 tax return. We have a link on our website to assist them in obtaining information from IRS regarding this requirement, if needed.

Please share with all employees.

THREE PRINCIPLES THAT EXPLAIN AUTHENTIC DECISION-MAKING

You can't make a good decision until you know who you are. Decisions based on someone else's values are dissatisfying and ineffective.

3 principles that explain authentic decision-making:

#1. Identity tells you what to do.

Who you are is the foundation of useful action.

You don't vacuum your house with a snowplow. And you can't do snow removal with a vacuum.

If you're a snowplow, look for snow. If you're a vacuum, look for a dirty carpet.

Identity shows you what you do best. You can get groceries with a snow plow, but it's not efficient. Snow plows are at their best when they feel the load of snow on the blade.

#2. Identity controls decisions.

Buying a car isn't a rational decision. It's about self-perception. I drive a pickup truck because I'm still that 13-year-old farm boy from Maine. It feels good.

Dr. James March suggests three questions for identity-based-decisions*:

1. Who am I?
2. What kind of situation is this?

3. What do people like me do in this kind of situation?

#3. Identity controls behavior.

Thirty years ago, Texas introduced an anti-litter campaign based on the self-perception of Texans. It wasn't "Give a hoot. Don't Pollute."



Texas's are anti-authoritarian. Their identity-based-campaign was, "Don't Mess with Texas." Willie Nelson sang, "Mommies tell all your babies, "Don't mess with Texas." Litter dropped over 70%.

When you forget who you are, you define yourself by your circumstances.

The danger of forgetting who you are is losing yourself to the organization you lead. You become unfulfilled and drained.

Tips:

Tell everyone who you are by word and example.

Tell everyone who WE are from an organizational point of view.

Warren Bennis said, "Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself ..."

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2019/03/14/three-principles-that-explain-authentic-decision-making/>

Mardi Claw

The U.S.D.A. Farm Services Agency (FSA), in Oklahoma, recently took a creative approach to “employee engagement” and building morale after a particularly stressful workload/reporting period.

The State and all County offices had just completed several major deadlines; and an idea to develop their own version of “Bring Your Pet to Work Day” was developed to help relieve some stress and have fun!

Since the Livestock programs deadline had been accomplished, it was a good time to have a little fun. They searched for a theme associated with Bring Your Pet to Work Day (which had been requested by employees several times.). Mardi Gras fell at just the right time. They found a “Mardi Claw” contest on Google and it seemed perfect for what they wanted to do!

The State FSA Office and all County offices had the opportunity to participate in a “Mardi Gras” themed competition with their pets on Mardi Gras Day, March 5, 2019.

There were three entries from county offices and four from the state office.

Contestants:

- 1: Duke
- 2: Daisy
- 3: Cricket
- 4: Scout
- 5: Willie Nelson
- 6: Lola
- 7: Sophia



Voting was open to all FSA employees in Oklahoma with 87 votes received; 52 of which were for Lola.

Congratulations to Lola (#6), the winner of the 2019 Take Your Pet to Work costume contest!
Winners:

1st Place: Lola (#6) belongs to Ali Givens, USDA FSA State Office

2nd place: Cricket (#3) belongs to Kelly Hunt, Caddo County FSA Office, and

3rd place: Willie Nelson (#5) also belongs to a State Office employee (in the vote count, it is strongly suspected the 3rd place winner received votes because of his name!!).

4 WAYS TO GET THE MOST FROM A DANGEROUS EMOTION

Anger is fascinating, not because it's good, because it's useful.

"Managing anger effectively motivates individuals to adopt effective assertive skills and leads to an increase in life expectancy."

You can't deal with something you deny.

Denying anger is a frustrating attempt at self-deception through redefinition. It's not politically correct to say, "I'm angry." You're allowed to feel irritation, agitation, or frustration. But not anger.

Anger isn't the issue. How you deal with anger is the issue.

Remarkable leaders learn how to navigate anger.

Explosive anger:

In my younger days I threw tantrums. I guess that makes me like Steve Jobs. (Sarcasm intended.)

Some expressions of anger are evil. Hitting your spouse in anger is evil. Throwing things in anger is out of the question. *Self-control is a necessary virtue.*

Warning: Persistent anger damages health, relationships, and potential.

Get the most from anger:

#1. Identify things within your control.

You're often angry at things outside your control. But successful leaders focus their

attention and energy on things within their control.

Anger is an opportunity to define constructive action.

#2. Develop problem-solving skills.

Persistent anger points to poor problem-solving skills. What nagging problem do you need to address?

Warning: You're more likely to have a heart attack if you don't learn to manage anger.

#3. Find courage to act.

Use anger as motivation to act. In extreme cases, an

abused spouse finds courage to get out of the relationship.

When you feel angry ask, "What do I need to do?"

Don't stew – do.

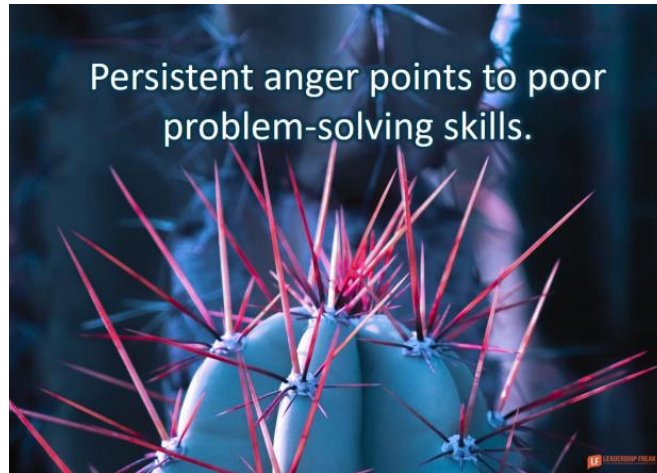
Tip: Wait an hour before you act.

#4. Turn anger into compassion.

You might feel angry about company layoffs.

Use anger to see the world through the lens of others.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2019/03/05/4-ways-to-get-the-most-from-a-dangerous-emotion/>



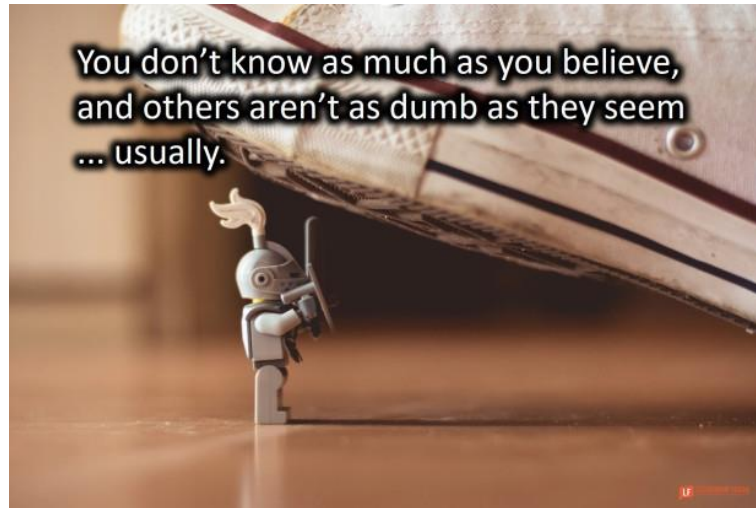
THE TOP 20 WAYS TO SAY WHAT YOU REALLY THINK

The false peace of not saying what you really think eventually sucks the life out of you.

Speak up because you'll complain less if things don't go your way.

20 ways to say what you really think:

1. Determine what you want. You know what you DON'T want. What DO you want?
2. Chill out. Breathe deep. Speak slowly. Sit down.
3. Bring an open spirit. Be a learner, not a knower.
4. "I could be wrong," is better than, "You're wrong."
5. Don't follow, "I could be wrong," with, "BUT." Instead try, "I could be wrong. I WONDER about ...?"
6. Ask questions before making statements. *You don't know as much as you believe, and others aren't as dumb as they seem ... usually.*
7. Explore purpose. "What's important to you about this?"
8. Think like a leader.
 - What's the possible blowback?
 - How will your ideas impact other people or teams? (That's how leaders think.)
9. Listen because it serves others, not because it's fun.
10. Learn from those who speak up and survive. What do they do?



11. Don't say, "You." *Focus on issues, not people.* Make it safe for others to lower their barriers. Conversations get personal when you attack.
12. Plan simple responses to possible objections. *Spontaneity is a dangerous*

strategy when you're under stress.

13. Build relationships before you need them. A strong relationship includes the right to disagree.
14. Strengthen relationships during disagreement.
 - Show respect.
 - Listen well.
 - Repeat what you're hearing.
 - Say, "Thank you."
15. Decide if it matters or you're responding to personal baggage. *Sometimes the things that bother you are about you, not others.*
16. Care for people because it's who you are, not because they deserve it.
17. Celebrate success frequently. Disagree rarely. Be known for gratitude, not complaining.
18. Speak up with kindness.
19. Remember that complainers often want something for themselves.
20. Speak from your heart.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2019/03/21/the-top-20-ways-to-say-what-you-really-think/>



HOUSTON FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD AWARD CEREMONY

Date:	Wednesday, May 15, 2019
Location:	United Way Center, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston
Time:	1:00 p.m.
Cost:	No fee (light refreshments will be provided)
Who should attend:	Federal Agency Leaders (or designee) and nominees

May 5-11, 2019
**35 years of honoring public servants and
connecting citizens with their government**
#PSRW

Celebrated the first week of May since 1985, Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is organized annually by the [Public Employees Roundtable \(PER\)](#) and its member organizations to honor the men and women who serve our nation as federal, state, county and local government employees.

Throughout the country, mayors, governors, agency leaders, communities and public service organizations participate in PSRW by issuing proclamations; hosting award ceremonies and special tribute events; and delivering messages about the value of public service. All government leaders and public servants from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate by showing appreciation to their employees and colleagues and by sharing stories of excellence in public service.

As part of this effort, the Houston Federal Executive Board is hosting an Awards Ceremony to honor accomplishments of federal employees in the Houston area. We invite you to join us in celebrating those in Public Service during this special event!

Please RSVP no later than April 26, 2019

REGISTRATION

Name:	Phone:
Agency:	City:
Email:	

Email registration to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov
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Cancellation Policy: If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged if within the appropriate management structure!



2019 Leadership FEB Class Registration

In order to maximize the benefits and expand the cohesive networking opportunities, no alternates will be authorized to attend single sessions. However, if an identified participant becomes unable to honor their commitment to the program, the employing agency is authorized to replace that individual for the duration of the program.

Participants **must attend a minimum of five sessions** in order to receive a certificate of completion for this program.

Forums may involve agencies with missions that require background investigations prior to the visit. If a registered employee has findings, their participation in that particular forum may be denied.

Due to limited availability, register as early as possible to reserve a slot for your participant. It is suggested that registrations be submitted no later than April 5th, 2019. Cancellations will be processed at no charge to the agency through that date. After that, we ask the agency to honor their obligation due to cost incurred; however, a substitute participant is authorized and encouraged.

Tuition for the program is \$750. This covers *Leadership FEB* program expenses for each forum, leadership books, parking fees for designated forums, and other materials. Personal expenses, lodging, and mileage are not included in this cost. Tuition is payable by the individual, the employer, or the sponsoring organization. Tuition paid with the application will be held until the selection process is completed. Tuition will be refunded if the applicant is not selected. *Agency/Registrant may pay the **course fee (\$750)** by check, credit card, or government voucher*

Payment: ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card (call number below for payment)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Dept. _____

Agency: _____

City: _____

Work Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Participant's Signature

Date

Agency Director/Commander Review/Approval

Date

Submit by email to: julius.i.keys.civ@mail.mil

Call with questions: 713-201-0906